intra-region trade and an action plan for poverty alleviation; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reaction of the Pakistan thereto ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA) : (a) Yes Sir. The 7th SAARC Summit has finalised a framework Agreement on a SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA). They have also adopted a consensus on eradication of poverty in South Asia.

(b) SAPTA envisages arrangements relating to tariff, paratariff, non-tariff and direct trade measures. Negotiation of tariff preferecnes will initially be on product-by-product basis. Least developed contracting States are protected by providing them wherever possible, special and more favourable treatment under this Arrangement which by an earlier decision of the 12th Council of Ministers, is to be made fully operational before December 1995.

The decisions relating to eradication of poverty in South Asia are based upon recommendations of the Independent South Asian Commission on Poverty Alleviation established at the Colombo Summit. The Dhaka Declaration commits member Governments to the eradication of poverty in South Asia, preferably by the year 2002 AD, through an Agenda of Action which embodies strategies of social mobilisation, decentralised agricultural development, small scale labour-intensive industrialisation and human development policies which emphasise the rights to work and to primary education.

Decisions in SAARC are unanimous. Pakistan was therefore as much party to the above decisions as other member States.

Fake Passports Racket

252. SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE :
SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE :
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA :

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether a racket involving issue of fake passports with far reaching consequences, in facilitating the escape of terrorists and proclaimed criminals from the country has come to light;

(b) if so, what are the details indicating modus operandi thereof; and

(c) what action has since been taken and is being taken in the matter ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA) : (a) and (b). Information regarding different rackets involving fake and fraudulent passports is received by the Government from time to time. Apart from the printing of counterfeit passports, these rackets inter alia include obtaining passports by submitting false or forged documentation; substituting photographs on the genuine passports; obtaining passports in false names; forging entries in genuine passports; obtaining passports by giving false information etc. Terrorists and proclaimed criminals might utilise these rackets.

(c) The Government has initiated steps to streamline the procedure for issue of passports and to improve the quality of the passport booklet to prevent tampering in order to deter the issue of fake and fraudulent passports. The Passports Act 1967 has been amended to provide for more stringent penalties for violations.

As and when specific cases come to the attention of the Government, necessary steps are taken under the law.

Implementation of Economic Oriented Foreign Policy

253. SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE :
SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE :
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA :